

# Spring River

## Conservation Opportunity Area



Ozark  
Highlands



*The Spring River in southwest Missouri contains several fish, crayfish and mussels found nowhere else in the state.*

Missouri Department of Conservation

The Spring River is located in southwest Missouri and flows west into Kansas and Oklahoma. Natural springs are numerous along the river, but most are small. Because of its location between the Ozarks and prairie regions, the Spring River supports one of Missouri's most distinctive combinations of fish, crayfish and mussels.

A total of 86 fish, 35 mussels and 4 crayfish live in Missouri's Spring River basin. Common sportfish include smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, spotted bass and rock bass. The Neosho madtom, redbfin darter, bluntface shiner and Neosho mucket are aquatic species of conservation concern within the Spring River and North Fork of the Spring River. Other fish, including redspot chubs, cardinal shiners and channel

darters, occur almost nowhere else in the state.

The Spring River Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) includes the land surrounding the western portions of Spring River and North Fork Spring River. Historically, native tallgrass prairie dominated the landscape. Oak savannas, bottomland woodlands and riverfront forests occurred along rivers and streams. Major goals for the COA include improved water quality, better aquatic and terrestrial habitat conditions, maintenance of diverse and abundant populations of native aquatic fish, crayfish and mussels and increased public appreciation for Spring River stream resources. Private landowners play an important role in helping to keep the Spring River and its tributaries healthy.

## Spring River Conservation Strategies:

- Increase acreage of high quality bottomland woodlands, oak savannas and riverfront forests.
- Increase conservation of karst, cave and spring features.
- Enhance water quality and stream habitat.
- Increase acres of reclaimed abandoned mine sites.
- Work with willing landowners to deliver conservation actions that favor healthy aquatic habitats and terrestrial natural communities.
- Increase outreach and education opportunities to provide information on the importance of landscape conservation and management practices.



Ken McCarty, Missouri Department of Natural Resources

*Hardpan prairies were once common in the Spring River COA. Hardpan prairies are named for an impervious layer of soil that stays saturated in winter and spring, but dries rock-hard during summer.*

### Priority Research and Inventory Needs

- Inventory aquatic animals and species of conservation concern.
- Identify target sites for bottomland woodland, oak savanna and riverfront forest restoration.
- Identify target areas for karst, spring and cave management.
- Compile existing baseline water quality data.

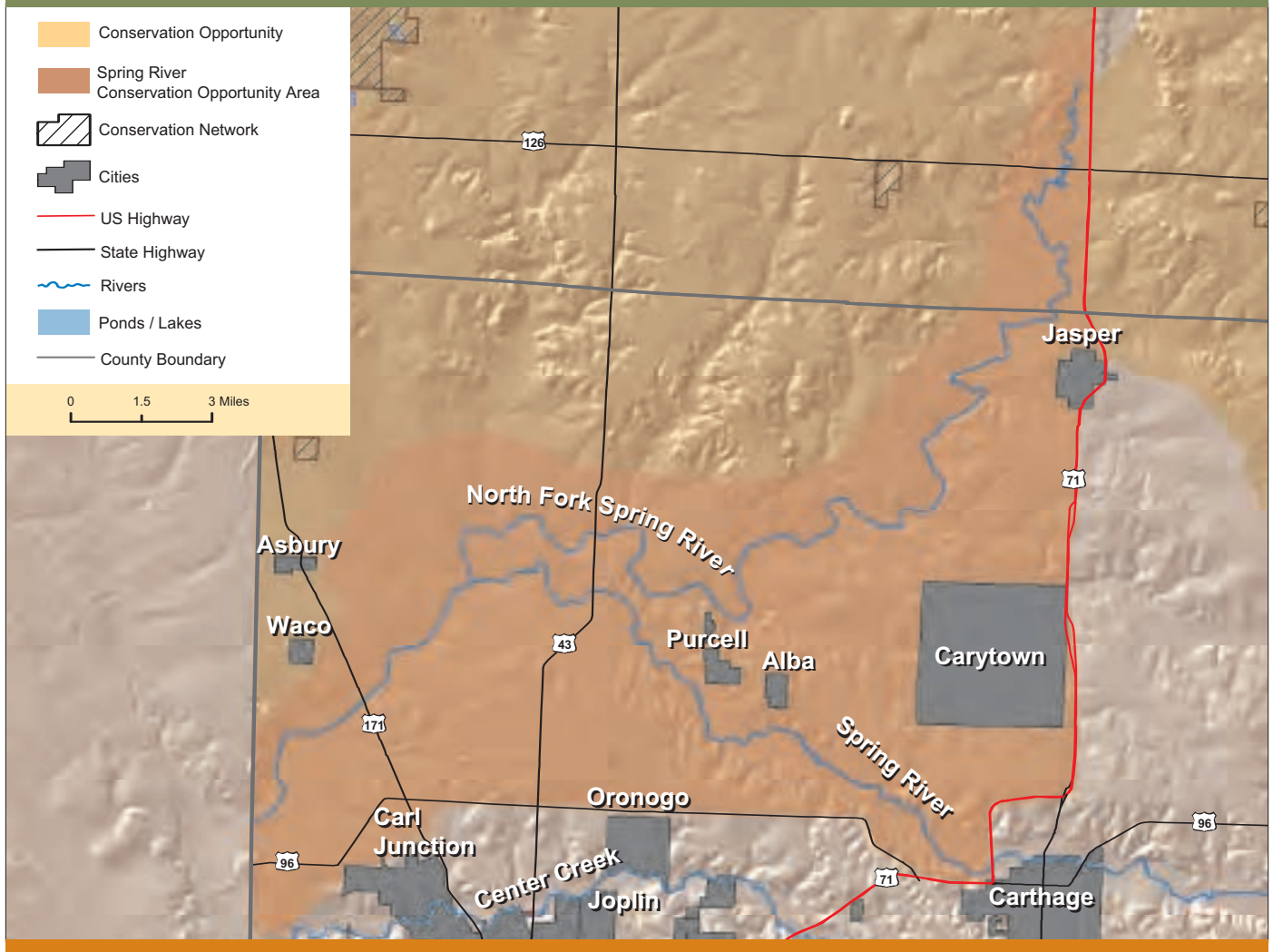
### Conservation Partners

**Existing:** Ozark Regional Land Trust; Stream Teams; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)

**Potential:** Audubon Missouri; MAKO (Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma) Fly Fishers; Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation (MCHF); National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf); Ducks Unlimited (DU); Private Landowners; Southwest Missouri Resource Conservation and Development; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)



## Spring River Conservation Opportunity Area



Jim Rathert, Missouri Department of Conservation

**Ringed crayfish** are found in southwest Missouri, northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma. They occur in clear, rocky permanent-flowing streams and rivers. Soil erosion and sediment pollution may make streams unsuitable for ringed crayfish and other aquatic animals.

## Funding Sources

**Existing:** MDC Private Lands Cost Share Program; USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program; Soil and Water Conservation District State Cost Share Funds; Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program; NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program

**Promising Future Sources:** DU Conservation Projects Program; NWTf Wild Turkey Super Fund; Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Special Area Land Treatment Program; DNR 319 Grants; MCHF Stream Stewardship Trust Fund; MDC State Wildlife Grants

## Existing Conservation Network

Private land initiative

## Stream Flow



*Unlike many stream basins, there are no large reservoirs in the Missouri portion of the Spring River Basin. River flows are lowest in the summer and early fall, with much of the river being too low to paddle during periods of drought.*

Missouri Department of Conservation

## Conservation Challenges

The Spring River Conservation Opportunity Area offers one of the best places to conserve a distinctive group of fish, crayfish and mussels. In the past 200 years, the landscape has been transformed from tallgrass prairie to fescue pasture and hay meadows with scattered cropland. This change in land cover has affected the terrestrial and aquatic wildlife of the Spring River COA. The North Fork Spring River is included on the

Missouri Department of Natural Resources 2002 “List of Impaired Waters” for sediment pollution. Sediment pollution is one of the leading threats for aquatic species of conservation concern, including those found in the Spring River and North Fork Spring River. Other potential obstacles to conservation success include gaining landowner participation and acceptance and limited funding and staff time.

To learn more about the Spring River Conservation Opportunity Area, please contact:



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